

UNTIL CHRIST IS ALL

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2018

THE CORNERSTONEPIQUA CONNECTION

Welcome to the newsletter of CornerstonePiqua. This periodical is meant to inform you of upcoming events in our church community, to discuss community matters, and to address issues relevant to the culture. Each letter includes a personal letter from Pastor Jamie, an article or two on theological matters, as well as an occasional article from a special guest. These newsletters are also available in digital form online at CornerstonePiqua.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

:: **MEMBERS GATHERING** | January 7th,
6:30-7:30pm | @CornerstonePiqua

:: **PRAYER & COMMUNION SERVICE** | January 28th,
6:30-7:30pm | @CornerstonePiqua

:: **PRAYER & COMMUNION SERVICE** | February
25th, 6:30-7:30pm | @CornerstonePiqua



CornerstonePiqua exists to proclaim the excellencies of Jesus Christ through gospel-centered preaching, Christ-exalting worship, Christ-forming discipleship, and Christlike service in Piqua, Miami County, and the world until Christ is all and in all.

THREE WAYS CHURCH SHOWS US THE GOODNESS OF CHRIST

**"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us
go to the house of the Lord!'"**
(Psalm 122:1)

Happy New Year, Cornerstone! On the last Sunday of 2017, I had the privilege to preach again from John 10, the wonderful "I am the good shepherd" passage. As I was preparing for that sermon, I was reminded of the ways the Lord has shepherded me throughout my life. Three ways stood out. The Lord has shepherded me (1) through His word, (2) through His people, and (3) through His undershepherds.

It occurred to me that all these ways are deeply connected to the church. At the end of my sermon, I endeavored to boast in the goodness of the Lord to give us a church family. This article is an extension of that meditation.

I should start off saying that going to church doesn't make you a Christian. Yet, the Bible assumes all Christians do. If I built a boat in my woodshop, equipped it with a sail and rudder, but never took it on the water, is it still a boat? Yes, technically. But only until I put my boat on the water can I be sure about its "boatness". It's the same with Christians. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian, but church is where Christians go. The New Testament pattern of the Christian life is that believers come together on the first day of every week to worship the Lord, encourage one another, pray together, hear the Word, and give.

Church provides the context through which the Good Shepherd shepherds His sheep. Consider three blessings the Lord gives us when we attend church...

(continued on next page...)

BLESSING 1: WE HEAR THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

Romans 10:17, **"Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."** Jesus shows His goodness to His people by shepherding us through His word. Hearing the Scripture preached, hearing its careful explanation, builds our faith. As we increase in our knowledge of God, we are strengthened.

For example: a man who knows the mercy of God toward him is able to show mercy to others. A woman who knows God is good and faithful is able to trust Him through a miscarriage. A wife who learns of God's patience with her is able to wait patiently for Him to save her husband. The more we hear the Word preached, the more we know the Lord's Person, the more reasons we have to trust Him.

Through preaching, Christ teaches us how to follow Him and equips us to teach others. As preachers explain the word and teach us how to apply it, we learn the Lord's ways. We know His will for how we ought to live a life that is pleasing to Him. Through applying the Scripture to our daily lives, the Lord begins to use us to advance His gospel. When we know how to follow Christ, we can help others follow Him. Remember the Great Commission. Every Christian is called to make disciples, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded (Mt 28:18-20). The ministry of pastors through the Word is to equip the saints for this work of ministry (see Ephesians 4:11-14).

BLESSING 2: WE SEE THE FLOCK OF GOD

Hebrews 10:24-25, **"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."** The Lord shepherds His sheep in the context of church through having them engage with one another. Notice the two "one another" commands in the passage above. Through our attendance at church we **"stir one another to love and good works"** and **"[encourage] one another"**. The Lord shows His goodness to us by using our brothers and sisters to encourage, inspire, and build us up.

When we gather as a body, we see the ways our brothers and sisters live. We see the accumulative effects of the gospel in producing faithfulness and fruitfulness in their lives. We watch how they carry themselves, we see how they are with their children. The Lord encourages us as we observe a young believer growing into Christian maturity. We watch how godly wives respect their husbands and how godly husbands cherish their wives. We witness single mothers being faithful to God, single men honoring sisters in Christ. We are encouraged to follow the example of retirees who spend their retirement on the advance of God's kingdom.

Can you see how this blessing is a two way road? In the same way the Lord uses others to encourage us, He uses us to encourage others. We are an encouragement to others when we simply come to church on the Lord's day. When our brothers and sisters see us in church, it is one more confirmation for them that Jesus is Lord, the Bible is true, the gospel is secure. When we come to church our brothers and sisters see the faithful hand of God to keep us in Christ for another week.

BLESSING 3: WE FEEL THE CARE OF OUR SHEPHERD(S)

The author of Hebrews goes on to write, **"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."** (13:17) The shepherd's staff has a hook on the end of it. The crook is meant to help the shepherd care for the sheep. When sheep would come in and out of the sheep pen, the shepherd would inspect each one. If he noticed something out of place, he would use his crook to take the sheep aside and help her.

The Good Shepherd shows His care for His sheep through pastors, elders of His church. These men, undershepherds, endeavor to follow the example of the Chief Shepherd in caring for the flock of God (see 1Peter 5:1-5). Your pastors have been entrusted with the responsibility to keep watch over your soul. Almighty God spilled the blood of His Son to purchase your salvation. You are precious to Him. And so, this is a responsibility your pastors take very seriously.

When you come to church, I want you to feel the God's shepherding care. You are not following Christ alone. God has provided a support system for you. Men are thinking about you, praying for you, pulling for you. When sermons are being written, they are being written with your spiritual care in mind. We want to see you flourish in God's kingdom. We desire to see Christ formed in you, to see God's glory demonstrated through you. We are eager to see God use you to disciple others.

There are plenty of reasons to miss church. Sickness, vacation, car troubles, occasional work concerns. But the blessings of Christ's shepherding care are just too good to miss regularly. Each one of you is a vital part of God's demonstration of His goodness. I hope you see that and agree with the Psalmist, **"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'"** There, at church, you get to boast in the goodness of Christ shepherding you through His word, His people, and His undershepherds.

Happy New Year, Cornerstone! I love you.

Until Christ is All,
Your Humble Undershepherd ❖

“They Devoted Themselves to Prayer”

By Jamie Wellman

Ten days after the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit fell on the 120 gathered in the Upper Room. This caught the attention of the whole city, so the Apostle Peter stood up to preach. He preached one of the most powerful sermons recorded in Scripture. You can read it in Acts 2:14-39. God used Peter's sermon to bring 3000 to salvation (see 2:41). In one day, through one sermon, the church grew from a-buck-twenty to 3120 people! A megachurch was launched in a single day.

That might sound amazing to you (and you'd be right). To me, that sounds terrifying. I am the kinda guy who considers a trip to Walmart a success if I leave with the same number of children I arrived with (doesn't even have to be the same ones!). A megachurch born in one day is a logistical nightmare. Where you gonna meet next week? Who has enough parking for 3100 people? Anyone play guitar? That's a heck of a lot of bulletins to print and fold!

I love what the next verse says, “**And they devoted themselves to....prayer.**” What do you do when your church grows from 120 to 3120 in a single day? The Bible says, you pray. Indeed.

You may have noticed a change in the structure of our worship services recently. It had become Brent's and my conviction that we have not devoted sufficient time to corporate prayer. That's not to say we didn't pray. By God's grace, we have always prayed during our services at Cornerstone. In our new order of worship, we have five different types of prayer: a prayer of dedication at the opening of the service, a prayer of intercession, a prayer of illumination as we open the Scriptures, a prayer of confession after the sermon, and a closing prayer as we ask the Lord to send us into the world with the message of the gospel. Three of these prayers we've always done, two are new. I want to explain the two new prayers, help you understand what they are, and what we (the congregation) should do during corporate prayer in a worship gathering.

The Prayer of Intercession:

In the Prayer of Intercession, we petition the Lord for the sake of others. We will take this time to pray for our own church, our city, our country, world issues, our political leaders. We will also pray for other churches. The advance of the gospel is bigger than our individual church, so we ask the Lord to bless His word as it is faithfully preached in other churches throughout our city.

The men I've asked to lead the prayers have been told days in advance, so they've had time to think about and pray about how to lead us. Let their prayers encourage you to pray big confident prayers to your big capable God. Don't just watch them. Listen, and pray with them. We are not 100 people having a quiet time, we are 100 people praying together.

The Prayer of Confession

After the Lord has instructed us from His word, we set aside a few minutes for a prayer of confession. During the prayer of confession, points drawn from the exposition of the text will be brought to bear on us. We thank the Lord for revealing the ways we have failed to walk out the standards set forth in the passage, we confess these sins before the Lord and we ask for forgiveness. The prayer leader should lead us to consider the ways we have done what we shouldn't and not done what we should. We expect the Lord will grant His grace to bear the fruit in keeping with that repentance.

During the prayer of confession, search your heart. Ask the Lord to reveal your sin. The prayer leader may identify your sin for you, but he does not know your heart. Pray the Holy Spirit would expose the areas of your life you should confess. After the service is over, it may be a good idea to confess those sins to a trusted brother or sister in the Lord (cf. James 5:16). After the prayer of confession, the prayer leader will give an assurance of God's mercy and forgiveness from Scripture. Upon hearing this, rejoice that our God is merciful, having paid the penalty for our sins on the cross of Christ.

As members of the church, let me encourage you to further participate in corporate prayer by suggesting topics for prayer. If the Lord has burdened your heart for a specific issue in our city or in our church, please let us know. Corporate prayer is corporate.

Whether we are 100 people or 500 people, may God be pleased to keep corporate prayer a central part of the reason we gather. Whatever we devote ourselves to as a church, prayer must always make the list. ❖

>> TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN TO WORSHIP <<

When the Lord Jesus climbed the mount of transfiguration, He brought Peter, James, and John with Him. He chose the same three when He entered Jairus' house to heal his daughter. When He pleaded with God in the garden of Gethsemane hours before His crucifixion, He kept those same men nearby. Why? He was teaching them. And, He was teaching them how to teach others. It was true discipleship.

Of course, discipleship is more than just taking someone along, but it is never less than that. The most fundamental part of discipling another person is spending time with them in prayer, worship, life. It is giving someone an opportunity to observe you. Parents of young children have a unique opportunity to disciple them on how to worship God in church.

For this reason, we have decided to invite CornerstoneKids into the sanctuary for all of Sunday morning worship. The best way children will learn how to worship the Lord during a Sunday gathering is by observing their parents.

We will maintain the Nursery and the Pebbles class. Once a child reaches school age (Kindergarten/1st grade), they'll be invited to sit in big church with their parents. At the same time, we are in the process of putting together resources to help parents teach their children how to listen to a sermon, how to engage with the Scriptures, and how to apply the Word to their lives. Stay tuned.

Of course this means church will have a few more distractions. Young children get antsy. Our Sovereign God made them that way. He is more than capable of granting them greater focus (and us more patience).

Our children will worship in the way we worship. Peter, James, and John had to learn how to be disciples of Christ. So did we. So will they. May we be good examples.

FOUR WAYS TO PREPARE YOUR FAMILY FOR CHURCH, AND ANOTHER...

"You're wearing these shoes, dang it. Stop kicking me!" I yelled at my toddler with my very best "I've-had-it-up-to-here" dad voice. He's half my size, half my strength, yet putting on his shoes is twice as hard. As I am wrestling a tantrum at the front door, my teenagers are arguing over headphones and who has to sit in the backseat of the van. My 5 year-old is crying because she was told that she can only bring 1 stuffed animal to church instead of 3. We pile into the car. Everyone under 10 years old is crying, everyone over 10 is frustrated. Personally, I am feeling bad because I yelled and haven't spoken more than two words to my wife all morning. Now it's on to church...to worship the Lord. Better put on some "Christian" music.

Soon as I park the van, everyone rushes out. Moments before service starts, Sara and I spread out to locate the brood. We gather them in our row. The music starts. Our older two look bored, barely singing. Our younger two are more interested in drawing or snacking or getting a drink or going potty or doing anything other than worshipping. During the sermon, the kids move from bored to antsy to downright ready to leave. They're distracting to me. They're distracting to others. I wonder if my wife has heard anything the preacher has said.

Service ends, our kids escape the sanctuary like someone pulled the fire alarm. Sara and I have a few rushed conversations with our church family. Eventually we load back into the van and drive home exhausted. What was that?! Why do we even bother going to church?! Why would we even think about doing it again next week?!

Any churchgoer blessed with children has had a similar experience. Families with small children will always have some level of chaos before, during, and after church. But it doesn't have to be like the example above (somewhat embellished). There are things parents can do to help prepare their family for worship on the Lord's Day. Here are four, and another:

1. **Have a Plan** – Make a Sunday morning plan. What time will you get up? What time will the kids get up? Have you got up early enough for personal devotion? Have you made enough time for breakfast? Decide outfits the night before. Keeping the kids up late on a Saturday night is probably not a good idea. Feed them a healthy breakfast, instead of a sugary one.
2. **Prepare Your Hearts** – Sunday morning is not for spectating, it is for participating. If we think church is for spectating, to "move" us, to "excite" us, then we'll be disappointed when our little ones ruin it. We will resent our kids being kids because we weren't able to "enjoy" the service. Instead, prepare your heart to serve. Remember how important your role in the church is. You have an opportunity to encourage and strengthen others in their walk with Christ. Despite what you may think, your family's presence at church is an encouragement to others—even those without children.
3. **Prepare Your Kids** – Teach your children about church. Tell them why you go. Teach them why it is important to participate in the songs and in the prayers. Teach them how to sit quietly and listen to the sermon. Give them something to help them follow along. On the drive in, pray together as a family. When possible, read the upcoming bible passage together. Over lunch, ask your kids about the sermon. What did they remember? What questions do they have? Recap the main points of the sermon. Help your children memoize that week's memory verse.
4. **Seek Joy in God's Sovereign Ways** – God could have made your children act like baby Jesus looks in paintings, but He didn't. They fidget, forget to use their "inside voice", and have to potty at all the wrong times. For His own mysterious reasons, God still calls families to worship together. Trust Him in that. There is joy in worshipping the Lord as a family. You just have to look for it. (And give yourself permission to feel it.) Another thing. Don't be surprised when they hear more of the sermon than you think.

Those are four easy ways to prepare your family for worship on the Lord's Day. But what if you don't have children? You can still help. You must. As a father with young kids...I plead with you...help.

+1. **Help Others** – If you attend church without young children, help those who do. Show patience to fidgeting families. Encourage mothers of young children. Let them know they're doing a great job. When the little ones are being distracting, put on a smile instead of a scowl. God has sovereignly brought these little "distractions" into your church to remind you to participate, not spectate. Be thankful for God's grace in leading parents to teach their children the importance of worshipping the Lord in church.

One of the most important things parents can do for their children is teach them the importance of church. We can't make our children trust Christ, we can't make them love God. But we *can* put them into as many places and times where the gospel is preached, prayed, and sang. Faith comes by hearing the gospel. Though we can't make them hear, we can turn the music up loud.

I would love to hear your thoughts on the matter. Email me at pastorjamie@cornerstonepiqua

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

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 19 :: MJ Larger
 27 :: Stephanie McMillen
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ANNIVERSARIES

BIRTHDAYS

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 4 :: Cory Breth
 8 :: Adaline Sterns
 15 :: Leslie Vondenhueval
 25 :: Emma Wellman

ANNIVERSARIES